

# Record

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**That all peoples  
may know Him**  
**Lottie Moon  
Christmas Offering  
for International  
Missions**

Goal: \$150,000,000

## Miss. churches make Lottie top listings

RICHMOND, Va. (BP and local reports) — As Southern Baptist churches set their sights on a record \$150 million goal for their Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, a Mississippi Baptist church has been spotlighted for its sacrificial giving to the offering in 2003.

West Kemper Church, De Kalb, made the top five list for per capita giving among the Southern Baptist Convention's 40,000 churches. The church's 36 members gave \$12,000, for a per capita amount of more than \$333.

"We are grateful for the impressive offerings of many of our larger churches," said International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin, a Mississippi native, "but it was an emotional experience to receive testimonies from many smaller congregations that went above and beyond what they had ever given before or would envision being a possibility."

"It's not about being a big church, but it's about churches getting a passion for missions and giving to missions," said Billy Hoffman, IMB director of development.

West Kemper Church was fifth largest giver per capita to the 2003 offering in the Southern Baptist Convention. "We're just mission-minded people," said Virginia Darnell, a member of the church for over fifty years. "We always have been."

"Tommy Jones, West Kemper's former pastor, stressed missions giving during his years of service at the church. They've given in large part because of his preaching and his leadership," said Bill Ready, Kemper Association missions director.

Mississippi Baptist churches joining West Kemper Church on the per capita Top 100 list for 2003 include:

- First Church, Gulfport, at \$131.97 per capita.
- Bethany Church, Calhoun city, at \$126.79 per capita.
- Sylvarena Church, Raleigh, at \$114.48 per capita.
- Bay Springs Church, Bay Springs, at \$113.15 per capita.
- First Church, Lumberton, at \$111.84 per capita.

Southern Baptists responded last year by giving a record \$136,204,648. That total was an increase of almost \$21.2 million — 18.4% — over the year before when churches fell \$10 million short of the goal.

A number of Mississippi Baptist churches also made the total dollars Top 100 list for the 2003 offering:

- First Church, Jackson, with \$329,004.19 — the top church in Mississippi.
- First Church, Gulfport, with \$226,069.12 — the only Mississippi Baptist church to make both Top 100 lists.
- Temple Church, Hattiesburg, with \$141,057.54.
- Broadmoor Church, Madison, with \$114,847.89.

- First Church, Columbus, with \$100,632.44.
- First Church, Madison, with \$83,209.32.

As Southern Baptists have begun collecting the Lottie Moon Offering for this year, their missionaries are looking to them again to support the amazing number of new workers God has been calling to overseas service.

"Southern Baptist missions is faith missions," Hoffman said. "We trust God will speak to the hearts of Southern Baptists to sacrifice and give generously to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering."

Last year, there were about 10,000 Southern Baptist churches that didn't participate in the offering. Hoffman hopes the smaller churches like West Kemper Church that have set a tremendous example in their giving will encourage other congregations to participate this year.

"These smaller churches helped release missionaries so they could go to the field," he said. "They can contact friends at other churches and say, 'Our church made a difference, so can yours.'"

First Church, St. Joseph, Mo., topped the per capita list by collecting \$341,368.35. With 374 members, that amount averages out to \$912.75 per member. They were the only church to crack the top 10 list for both per capita giving and total dollars.

Bettendorf Mission Church, Bettendorf, Iowa, made the top

five list with only three members, collecting a total of \$1,180. That amount averages out to \$393.33 per member. Other churches included in the top five were Peninsula Church, Grove, Calif., \$6,000, with 16 members; and Peace Haven Church, Wikesboro, N.C., \$3,020.77, with nine members.

Calvary Church, Winston-Salem, N.C., sits at the top of the total dollars list after collecting \$763,403.27. With about 5,000 members, the church also earned a spot on the top 100 per capita list. Their gift breaks down to an average of \$153.08 per member.

The four other churches that made the top five were First Church Rogers, Rogers, Ark., \$515,328.77; First Church, Fort Smith, Ark., \$474,084.89; Prestonwood Church, Plano, Texas, \$377,600; and Concord First Church, Knoxville, Tenn., \$344,170.23.

Through Southern Baptists' continued support, more missionaries will be able to reach a lost world, and those already on the field will be able to continue sharing the Gospel.

"We have been able to remove restrictions on missionary appointments, and currently more than 3,000 candidates are in the appointment process," Rankin said. "We must sustain last year's level of generous and sacrificial giving to the Lottie Moon Offering that those being called out of our churches can be obedient to go."

## WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

Directions

Just for the Record

Sunday School Lessons

### November

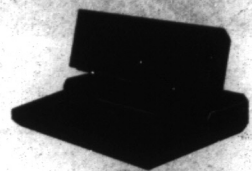
Through the Mississippi Baptist Convention, a sharp decline in giving was reported last month and for the year. The Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention reported a November total of \$1,180,000 given last month, a sharp decline from the \$1,180,000 given in the month of October. The Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention reported a November total of \$1,180,000 given last month, a sharp decline from the \$1,180,000 given in the month of October.

### SBC CP

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program (CP) reported a November total of \$1,180,000 given last month, a sharp decline from the \$1,180,000 given in the month of October. The Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention reported a November total of \$1,180,000 given last month, a sharp decline from the \$1,180,000 given in the month of October.



## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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39205-0530 (601) 968-3800  
Fax: (601) 292-3330  
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

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# Stem cell research, then and now

*In the raucous public debate over scientific experimentation on human stem cells, one pro-experimentation argument has been heard above all the rest — that there is simply no place to find a sufficient amount of the coveted cells other than in the core of developing humans at the embryonic stage. Therefore, the argument goes, science should be excused as it goes about destroying developing human life for the stem cells contained in their embryos. There is no other way, we are told.*

*Nothing could be farther from the truth.*

— Editor's Notebook  
August 23, 2001

Back at the virtual dawn of the debate over stem cell research, The Baptist Record was among the small number of people and publications that hastened to point out the true nature of stem cells — namely, that stem cells are neither rare nor found only in the developing human embryo. That was somewhat of a radical notion back then, as science and business interests pushed for the destruction of embryos on a massive scale so their stem cells could be recovered.

Since that time, human stem cells have been found in umbilical cord blood, skin, bone marrow, hair follicles, the nose, and even fat, to name just a few locations. Although all stem cells from all locations are not equally efficacious, the near future holds great potential for working with these non-embryonic stem cells so that baby humans don't have to die.

On November 25 just past, Hwang Mi-Soon took her first shaky steps in 19 years. The paralyzed South Korean woman was the beneficiary of stem cells from umbilical cord blood that were transplanted directly into her damaged spinal cord. Amazingly, the stem cells began to recast themselves into Hwang's own spinal cord cells within three weeks.

"We were all surprised at the fast improvements in the patient," said her doctor, Professor Song Chang-Hoon of the Chosun University Medical School in South Korea.

In July of this year, Americans Susan Fagt and Laura Dominguez began walking with braces after they received transplants of their own stem cells into the damaged areas of their spinal cords. The stem cells in both cases were recovered from common olfactory tissue (sense of smell tissue) located between their noses and their brains, by Portuguese surgeon Carlos Lima.

Brazilian doctors recently announced that Maria da Graca Pomeceno, who suffered a brain hemorrhage that left her paralyzed on one side of her body and unable to speak, is now able to walk and talk — thanks to a transplant of her own bone marrow stem cells within five days of the hemorrhage.

Christians were right in not caving to the special interests that wanted to unnecessarily destroy so many humans. Time has borne out the almost complete futility of depending solely on embryonic stem cells for research and experimentation in this promising field of medicine. In the not-too-distant future, we will undoubtedly be able to remove the "almost" that precedes "complete futility."

In the meantime, we would do well to keep in mind the final words of the

**AFTER THE CONFUSING DARKNESS OF WORLDLY MEDIA AND A CULTURE WITHOUT A CLUE, THEY FINALLY TURNED TOWARD THE LITTLE CHURCH ON THE HILL. SUDDENLY, A LIGHT DAWNED....**



August 23, 2001, editorial quoted at the beginning of this column:

*The lesson, borne out in history so many times, is that science will go as far as we allow it to go. Science is not moral, but we are. Science has no innate ethics, but we do. Science recognizes no God, but we know better.*

*Science cannot set standards. We can, and we must when it comes to stem cell research — and Christians should be heard on this critical issue.*

*Too much is at stake to do otherwise.*

Southern Baptists have always believed that together we can accomplish much more than we ever could apart. That's what drives the Cooperative Program and the special missions offerings our churches give each year to support and sustain our denomination's response to God's Acts 1:8 command.

As we approach a time of focus on international missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, we are reminded of the all-important calling God has given us to never cease taking the gospel to the ends of the earth until the job is completed.

At the North American Mission Board, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder in close partnership with our friends at the International Mission Board. As technology, easier travel and lightning-speed communication continue making our world smaller every day, there are ever-increasing opportunities for North American missions and international missions to work cooperatively.

Each year, so many future leaders from around the world make their way to the United States to attend college. What an opportunity the church has to influence the homelands of these visitors by impacting them

## GUEST OPINION:



### The world next door

By Bob Reccord, president  
North American Mission Board  
Atlanta

for Christ during their years in our land. And there are many people groups from throughout the world who are represented by populations present in the United States and Canada.

Today, one in 10 (11.2%) residents of the United States was born in another country. Forty percent of children in the United States under the age of 18 are non-Anglo. As of the 2000 census, the number of foreign-born residents and their children born in the United States reached 56 million, or one in five people. Three decades ago it was one in 20.

God has literally placed the world right next door.

The past year has given us unwelcome reminders about the sacrifice our international missionaries might be called to make and about the instability in which they serve. But

just as our nation cannot afford to ignore and withdraw from the challenges throughout the world, the church — and specifically Southern Baptists — must never pull back from this mission.

The events of the last three years starkly illustrate there is indeed a battle between good and evil taking place in the world today, and if we do not confront evil, it will continue devouring more victims and generating more tragedy. We know that the greatest tragedy is dying without a relationship with God through Christ. Yet a wide ocean of souls still exists in that precarious position.

Our prayers, our participation and our offerings are all important keys to the ability of Southern Baptists to continue reaching the ends of the earth. But we also must impact the

world beyond us by reaching out to the world citizens who make their way to this nation.

In Acts 8:26-40, we read of Phillip's encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch. His first reaction might have been to avoid him altogether. The eunuch looked different, dressed different, spoke different and probably held beliefs very different than Phillip's. But that didn't stop Phillip from approaching him.

The Bible tells us he "told him the good news about Jesus" and before the conversation was finished, the Ethiopian was baptized. We can assume the eunuch returned to his homeland, sharing what had happened to him and introducing others to Christ.

Phillip was obedient, prepared and willing.

Just as Southern Baptists so generously give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions each year, my prayer as we focus now on international missions is that all of us would generously support the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions — and be sure we are each ready to embrace the world that's living next door.



# Indian politicians exploit religion for power

KOCHI, India (BP) — India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), desperately seeking its way back to power in the Asian giant, is reverting to its anti-minority political platform known as "Hindutva" or Hindu nationalism, according to a Nov. 30 report by Compass Direct.

If the platform is implemented, Christians and Muslims could face a backlash of Hindu extremism.

Compass Direct, a news service which focuses on Christians worldwide who are persecuted for their faith, reported that the BJP re-elected L.K. Advani to party leadership during a three-day national executive meeting in late November in Haridwar. Advani was once subpoenaed by a court for his involvement in the demolition of a mosque.

In a hard-hitting speech, Advani declared his party's commitment to constructing a "Hindu India" and called the party "a chosen instrument of the divine."

Advani's colleague and former Indian premier, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, endorsed the aggressive Hindutva platform.

Concern about the beating it took in this year's state assembly elections in Maharashtra and elsewhere was evident throughout the BJP meeting. However, "even if we fail here or there, we will always bounce back," Vajpayee said.

Observers say the BJP plans to encourage more anti-Christian and anti-Muslim sentiment across the nation of 1 billion people in order to bol-

ster its electoral standing in polls and maintain a footing in India's federal administration.

"Let every adversary of ours be warned," Advani said. "If anybody tries to take the cover of secularism to indulge in anti-Hindu politics and

shape policy decisions.

By committing to the political agenda of a "Hindu India," the BJP likely will launch aggressive campaigns against Christian and Muslim communities, which the BJP sees as supportive of their political rivals. Christian and other minority leaders fear a new backlash along the lines of the ideological mass mobilization that preceded the destruction of Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya in 1992.

Advani has called the conversion of tribal Hindus to Christianity and Buddhism "fraudulent."

"Why is raising one's voice against such fraudulent conversions of poor tribals and other indigenous people considered a communal act in this country?" he asked.

"The time has come to proclaim, and proclaim with all the courage of our conviction, that India is secular principally because of its Hindu ethos. Remove this Hindu ethos, and there will be no India left."

India's constitution declares that India is a secular state, clearly providing the freedom to propagate any religion or social cause.

Senior party functionaries believe the BJP's electoral base is eroding due to the alienation of party workers and the mismanagement of BJP-ruled states, Compass Direct reported, noting that the BJP and its affiliated organizations have given the "green light" for its cadres to work against Christian groups which they fear are converting Hindus.

As part of a "homecoming" program, more than 300 tribal Christians were "reconverted" to Hinduism in October in a mass ceremony organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, or World Hindu Council) in the northeastern state of Orissa.

"It was the largest purification program carried out by us," said Gauri Prasad Rath, state secretary of the VHP. "Three hundred and thirty-six people from 80

families who had been lured to become Christians were brought back to Hinduism."

Indian Christian leaders expressed shock and dismay over the incident. "This is nothing but a vicious and hostile hate campaign launched by the VHP," said John Dayal, general secretary of the All India Christian Council, the largest Christian body in India. "We have told the state government several times about this hate campaign."

According to Christian leaders, the militant VHP plans to triple its presence within two years in India's highly sensitive tribal belt which spans Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. The BJP governs these states and also forms part of a coalition government in the state of Orissa.



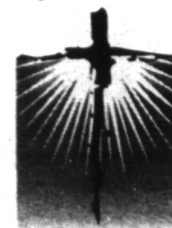
**WASTED WORSHIP** — A pilgrim, one among millions, offers a gift of flower petals to the holy Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh, India. Uttar Pradesh is the historical cradle of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, yet also is home to more than 32 million Muslims — nearly a third of India's total Muslim population. Despite opposition and persecution, Christian believers are multiplying rapidly in the state. (BP photo)

statecraft, the BJP will stand in their path like a rock, prepared to make any sacrifice."

At a recent national executive meeting in northern India, the BJP chief assured leaders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological movement that spawned the BJP, that the party will return to its core Hindutva values to

## Warning criticized

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has unveiled stronger warning labels for the abortion drug RU-486, but pro-life advocates and the father of a teenager who died after taking the pill said that action is insufficient. The FDA announced it is expanding the "boxed warning" for Mifeprex, the trade name for mifepristone, also known as RU-486. Mifeprex's "boxed" label, which constitutes the highest level of warning on an FDA-approved drug, says "[s]erious and sometimes fatal infections and bleeding occur very rarely" after abortions, including those from the use of RU-486. The federal agency also noted that a third woman had died after using the abortion drug. The most recent fatality, reported in August, involved a 22-year-old woman, whose name was undisclosed and who was seven weeks pregnant when she died of an apparent systemic infection, according to an agency spokesman. Previously, two deaths following the use of the abortion drug had been reported. Last year, Holly Patterson, 18, died of a systemic infection in September after obtaining RU-486 from a Planned Parenthood clinic in Hayward, Calif. In October 2001, a 30-year-old woman, whose identity was undisclosed, died from a ruptured ectopic pregnancy. Monty Patterson, Holly's father, called for stronger action by the FDA. "How many more deaths is it going to take before the FDA takes action to remove this drug from the market?" he told The New York Times, according to LifeNews.com. "I'm not convinced this drug is safe, and I still think it should be banned." Wendy Wright, senior policy director of Concerned Women for America, said, "When women's lives are at stake, this is unacceptable. While the label changes implicitly admit the dangerous nature of the drug, trusting abortionists to follow the warnings is a futile effort and does nothing to make the drug itself safe."



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

THE  
SECOND  
FRONT PAGE

*Record*

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"The main project of the VHP is to work in tandem with the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, which is notorious for turning tribals against Christians and Muslims and attacking Christian institutions and personnel," Dayal said.

Hindu orators have unleashed a series of sermons against Christian thought and Christian mission work in rural areas. According to Compass Direct, illiterate villagers have been misled by lies and half-truths spread through indigenous-language tracts. Christian leaders now fear that this renewed hate campaign — with the blessing of Advani's BJP — could lead to more conflict.

Advani and leaders like him are unnerved because the new Congress Party-led federal government is rewriting history texts for schools. A panel of historians discovered that the books were altered during BJP rule to include misinformation on other faiths.

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## Looking back

### 10 years ago

Southern Baptists join a newly-created Christian organization planning to provide hospitality to the families of the athletes participating in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

### 20 years ago

Wildwood Church, Clinton, is the sole Mississippi representative on the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's list of the 671 fastest-growing churches in the SBC. Wildwood has grown 512% in the past five years, the study said.

### 50 years ago

The Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) vote unanimously to recommend to the SBC Executive Committee that it be allowed to move from its present site in Atlanta to Fort Worth, Tex.



## Schiavo waits as court case moves ahead

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (BP) — The U.S. Supreme Court may have the final say as to whether Terri Schiavo, a comatose woman living in Florida, lives or dies.

Her husband has been successful so far in his fight through the courts to have her feeding tube removed, but lawyers for Florida Gov. Jeb Bush filed an appeal with the high court Dec. 1, asking the justices to take the case and overturn a ruling by the Florida Supreme Court that could lead to her death.

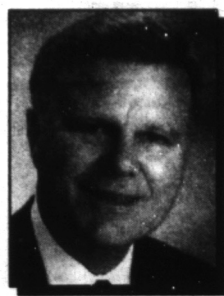
Legal briefs were filed with the U.S. Supreme Court just two days before Schiavo's 41st birthday (Dec. 3). Lawyers argue that if Schiavo dies, her constitutional right of equal treatment under the law will have been violated.

The U.S. Supreme Court does not have to take the case; it could decline to hear it and let the Florida high court's ruling stand.

### UNDESERVING

It was Sunday morning after Thanksgiving week, and I had the privilege of being in church at my home church. I have this privilege only a few Sundays of the year and I was thankful at this Thanksgiving season for the opportunity of worshipping with the Broadmoor family. As churches all across the Southern Baptist Convention were doing, they focused on the Week of Prayer for International Missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. In fact, the president of the International Mission Board, Jerry Rankin, was there to bring the message and a word of challenge and encouragement to the church. He did an outstanding job as he reminded us of God's goodness toward us and the great opportunities, responsibilities, and blessings that are ours as we tell the Good News of Jesus' life-changing presence among us. It was a time that we came before the Lord and saw the need of our world for Jesus Christ.

When the service was over I was standing and talking with folks in the congregation, some I had not seen in months and others with whom I was just renewing fellowship of recent days. From within the crowd came a lady whom I had never seen or met who said she just had to shake my hand. As we shook hands she told me how much she enjoyed hearing me speak. I thanked her, thinking that she had heard me at some other church or maybe at Broadmoor in days gone by. We visited and chatted a



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

while and she told me she was so glad that she had the opportunity to meet my sweet wife. I said, "Wonderful!" She told me why she was there on that Sunday morning. She was from out of state and had heard that I was going to be speaking and wanted to stay to hear me so she delayed going home by a day. It was then I realized she thought I was the guy who had just brought the message. She thought I was Jerry Rankin. I also realized that everything that she had said about my wife, my message, my leadership, my influence, and me were all 100% totally undeserved.

Now what do I do? I did not want to embarrass her. I did not know how to correct her and explain that I was not preaching that morning and I was not Jerry Rankin. I wondered if I should recommend that she see her optometrist. Before I could do anything to change her perception, she grabbed my hand and shook it again. She said, "I have got to run. It is such an honor to have met you." With that one more undeserved comment, I smiled and she left. I spoke to a few other folks who were standing around and then as I left all I could think about was how unde-

serving I was of everything she had thought and said.

As I walked along, the Lord began to impress upon my mind how right I was about being undeserving. I was undeserving not only of the comments made by a lady who had mistaken me for someone else, but undeserving of all of the enormous blessings He has showered upon my life. Am I deserving of the blessings of being born in the United States of America? Did I deserve being born into the family from which I received so many spiritual helps? Am I deserving of the schools I attended, the people who influenced me, the health that I have enjoyed, or the friends that have enriched me? Am I deserving of the accidents I have avoided and the opportunities I have enjoyed? Am I deserving of the opportunity that was mine to hear the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus and to be saved by His grace? No! An entire mosaic of my life began to fall into place and every part and piece, every blessing and triumph, and every opportunity and joy was undeserved.

At times you and I lapse into thoughts of deservedness thinking that we are better than others,

brighter than others, more capable than others, and more champions of faithfulness than others. We think that somehow God in His all-knowing fairness and understanding of the wealth of our capabilities and contributions pours out upon us good things. When we lapse into such moments, God in His goodness truly does bring us back to a moment of reflection where we realize and remember that each of us is unworthy and undeserving of the outpourings of goodness and blessings from the Lord or from those around us who may have mistaken us to be somebody we are not or to be more than we are.

All of that brings us back to an understanding of how good God is to us, that while we are undeserving He still loves us. While we may not understand, we only become worthy because He who lives in us makes us worthy. His grace is sufficient for us and we become deserving because Jesus is ours. This should stimulate us to live with a greater awareness of His love and give to a greater degree of care and passion for the rest of our undeserving world to come to know our great caring, saving, and loving God who does for us even when we do not deserve it.

With needs so great around the world, with love so great from heaven, with resources in abundance, may we give so others who are undeserving may be blessed by those of us who have been blessed!

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## Guidestone announces stable, reduced rates

DALLAS (BP) — Continued positive trends in insurance rates were reported to trustees of GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention (formerly the Annuity Board) during their November meeting in Dallas.

A \$55.7 million budget for the coming year was adopted during the meeting.

Guidestone President O.S. Hawkins told trustees that GuideStone's "re-rate process for our medical plans is the best news we have

given our participants in years. In fact, many of our Personal Plan participants will see no increase in their medical rates for 2005 and almost 40% will actually receive a reduction in their rates."

The good news also extends to Personal Plan participants who have long-term disability coverage with GuideStone, Hawkins reported. "We are pleased to announce a 10% reduction in rates effective Jan. 1, 2005, for our Personal Plans Long Term Disability coverage. In an environment where so many costs are going up, this reduction in cost is indeed good news," he said.

Hawkins, in his report to trustees, spoke on GuideStone's theme for 2004 from Isaiah 54:2 which says, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of

your dwellings; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes."

Utilizing an "ABC" acronym, Hawkins said, "We have 'lengthened our cords' by having an Attitude of expansion; we have 'strengthened our stakes' by focusing on the Basics of our work; and we have 'not spared' as we have renewed our Commitment to go the extra mile in serving our participants."

George Tous van Nijkerk, chairman of the trustees' budget subcommittee, told the board that the proposed 2005 budget "is merely a tool for ministry. The staff and the trustee budget subcommittee have worked diligently to propose a budget that fully undergirds the ministries we provide with only a small increase over 2004."

The \$55.7 million unanimously approved by trustees is a 4.8% increase over 2004. GuideStone receives no Cooperative Program funds for operations from the Southern Baptist Convention, but pays all expenses from an advisory fee on its investment funds. All receipts from Cooperative Program money are paid as financial assistance to needy retired ministers or denominational workers or their widows.

John Jones, GuideStone's chief operating officer, reviewed the key financial indicators for the first nine months of 2004 and previewed GuideStone's critical business projects for 2005.

As of the end of September, assets under management totaled \$7.5 billion, Jones reported. He noted that GuideStone is showing substantial progress in managing expenses and is experiencing a notable increase in participants' contributions to retirement plans.

In previewing the critical projects for 2005, Jones emphasized the name change implementation. "Following the first affirmative vote by the Southern Baptist Convention in June 2004, we are diligently working to introduce our new name, GuideStone Financial Resources," Jones said. "We will continue this emphasis through June of next year when the second convention vote will occur."

Jones also affirmed GuideStone's continuing work to provide an even more competitive medical program. "We are encouraged by the responses of our participants to the revisions that have been made in the medical plans. The larger variety of plans with the increased utilization of network discounts has enabled us to pass on more competitive rates to our participants," he reported.

Roddy Cummins, executive officer for investment services, noted that AB Funds Trust celebrated its third anniversary on Aug. 27 operating as a registered investment company.

"Three years marks an important milestone in terms of establishing an industry presence and a performance track record," Cummins said. "We have reached this point with a performance record that any mutual fund company would be proud to own."

Lipper Inc., a nationally recognized Reuters company that compares the performance of mutual funds having similar investment objectives, reported that, as of Sept. 30, 11 of 13 retirement plan funds posted a three-year performance record above median in their respective peer universes.

Hawkins





# NAMB: Prepare for Jehovah's Witnesses

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — If the followers of this uniquely American-born religion have not visited your home and left their material, they probably will.

Founded in Pennsylvania, now with headquarters in New York, Jehovah's Witnesses' rapid growth at the end of the 20th century pushed membership totals to 1.1 million in North America and more than six million worldwide.

Southern Baptists and other evangelicals need to prepare with sound doctrine to defeat the inroads being made by this modern-day cult, says Tal Davis, interim director of interfaith evangelism at the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

Jehovah's Witnesses, with missionaries who are well-versed in their view of scripture, focus on converting everyone who is not a member of their faith, and they don't place Jesus Christ at the foundation of that conversion experience, Davis noted. They believe that salvation is found only in being associated with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, which they regard as Jehovah's only accurate channel for biblical interpretation.

"Thus, Jehovah's Witnesses have a works-based salvation — a salvation that is determined by one's adherence to the directives of the society," Davis explained.

To help Southern Baptists and other evangelicals prepare for the inevitable knock at the door, NAMB has produced the third in a series of resources which explain what specific cults believe and how they operate — and how to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with their followers.

In the Name of Jehovah: Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses, is an educational program that can be shown in its entirety for special worship services or in conference settings. The DVD is formatted in segments appropriate for groups or for individual study and includes a discussion guide.

In the Name of Jehovah is the first NAMB interfaith program to be released solely in DVD format. The two previous products — The Mormon Puzzle, released in 1997, and The Cross and the Crescent:

Understanding Islam, issued in 2001 — are available in both VHS and DVD.

The program was produced and directed by Wolfgang Schumacher of NAMB, who served in similar capacities with the two previous products.

Davis said Schumacher was given unprecedented access to Jehovah's Witnesses facilities at the Watchtower Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, although none of the organization's leaders or spokesmen would participate in on-camera interviews.

The DVD is hosted and narrated by television personality Joe Washington, host of Home and Garden Television's Groundbreakers show.

"The product has two goals," Davis said. "First, to educate and inform Christians about the beliefs, practices and history of Jehovah's Witnesses so they will not be misled or deceived into becoming a follower, and second, to equip Christians to respond and share a practical witness to Jehovah's Witnesses and their families."

Rudy Gonzalez, former director of NAMB's interfaith evangelism unit and now a vice president at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, is one of several national authorities featured on the DVD who explore the basic doctrines of the cult and how to present a strong Gospel presentation.

"In the Name of Jehovah will equip those who watch and study it to present the life-saving message of God's grace with discernment and confidence," Gonzalez said. "It is a must for all believers who take seriously the evangelism of all people."

Among other notable personalities who participated in the project: James Bjornstad, philosophy professor at Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio, who has done extensive research in cults; Southern Baptist pastor and former Jehovah's Witness Paul Blizard of Memorial Church in Beckley, W.Va.; Ron Rhodes, president of Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., one of the nation's foremost experts on cults and sects; Randall Watters, president of Free Minds,

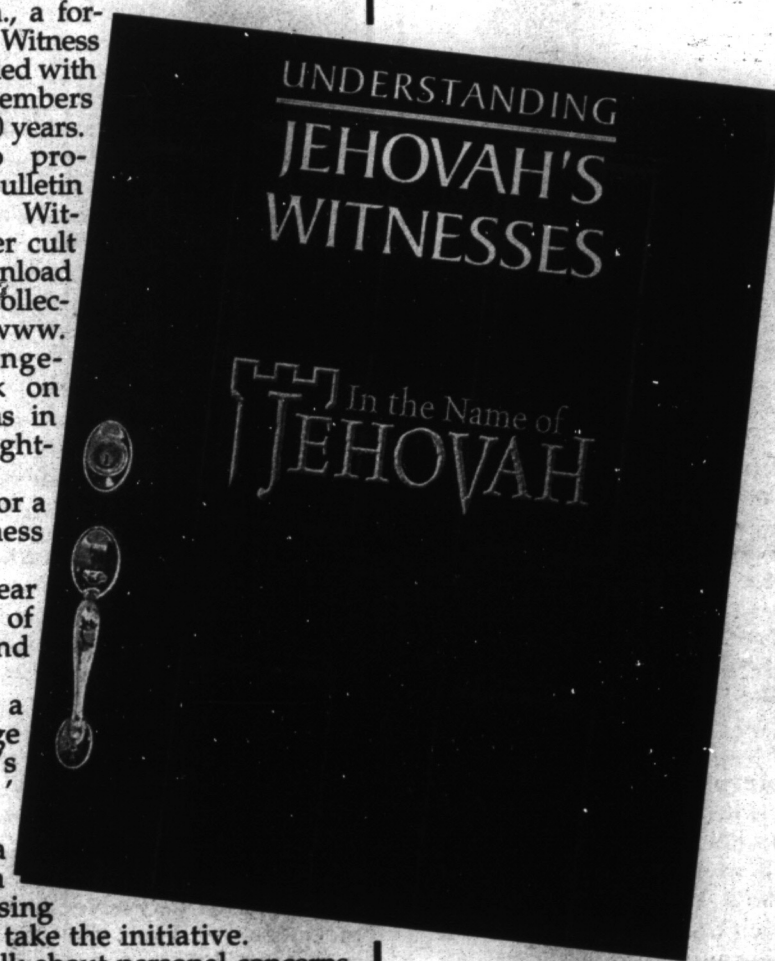
Inc., in Manhattan Beach, Calif., a former Jehovah's Witness and an expert on cult recruitment; and Joan Cetnar of Kunkletown, Pa., a former Jehovah's Witness who has counseled with former cult members for more than 30 years.

NAMB also provides a Belief Bulletin on Jehovah's Witnesses and other cult groups. To download items from the collection, visit [www.namb.net/evangelism](http://www.namb.net/evangelism) and click on Belief Bulletins in the lower right-hand corner.

To prepare for a Jehovah's Witness visit:

- Build a clear understanding of your faith and the Bible.
- Acquire a basic knowledge of Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs.
- Make a definite plan for the witnessing encounter and take the initiative.
- Initially, talk about personal concerns to establish a friendly, courteous and sincere relationship with the Jehovah's Witness. Gradually move on to a discussion of theological issues.
- Be prepared to explain specific biblical passages supporting Christian doctrines.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** In the Name of Jehovah may be ordered for \$19.99 plus \$8.00 for shipping by calling NAMB's customer service center at 1-866-407-NAMB (6262) and request the product number ISBN 1-59312-04-00



## China revs up religious repression campaign

BEIJING, China (BP) — When outgoing Secretary of State Colin Powell met with Chinese officials in October, they assured him they were willing to re-open a dialogue on human rights abuses in their country and Powell left saying relations between the United States and China were the best they've been in more than 30 years.

Recent reports of increased persecution of Christians may construct a different assessment of the communist nation.

Beijing is set to host the 2008 Summer Olympics, and government officials are making new efforts to improve China's image. In September, however, the country again was included along with nations such as North Korea, Iran, and Sudan on the U.S. State Department's list of countries of particular concern as severe violators of religious liberty. The State Department cited reports of imprisonment, beatings, torture and the destruction of places of worship in China.

Some observers say the rise in suppression of Christians who may pose a threat is an attempt to "tidy up" before the eyes of the world are on China.

One example of such behavior began in mid-September when Cai Zhuohua, a prominent 32-year-old pastor who led six house churches in Beijing, was kidnapped by three plainclothes officers. Later, his wife was kidnapped along with her brother and sister-in-law, according to Voice of the Martyrs, an Oklahoma-based interdenominational ministry aiding the persecuted church.

Authorities found about 200,000 copies of the Bible and other Christian literature in Zhuohua's possession. They believe he was operating an illegal printing press, though a source close to the pastor said the products were intended solely for internal use and not for profit.

Todd Nettleton, VOM director of news services, told Baptist Press he expects Zhuohua to be put on trial any day, though the charges likely will not be related to fraud or illegal business practices.

"The Chinese government wants to make this a criminal case rather than a religious freedom case so that the rest of the world won't understand what's

going on," Nettleton said. "But after the arrest of the four people, one of the Chinese newspapers in the local area where the wife was arrested called this the most serious case on overseas religious infiltration since the founding of the People's Republic of China. So clearly somebody thinks it's a religion case."

Another example happened in July when more than 100 house church leaders were arrested at a retreat. They were surrounded by more than 200 military police who arrived at the scene in 40-plus police and military vehicles, VOM reported. The Christians were interrogated and pressured to renounce their faith under threat of formal charges and a trial, but by mid-August all but five of them were released following an international outcry led in part by VOM. The five remaining detainees could face long prison sentences, VOM said.

In an Aug. 27 column posted on the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) website, BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz praised the progress in religious freedom being made



in China and extolled the freedom to worship he experienced while on a BWA "Friendship Tour" to China. Lotz acknowledged that China lacks "the Western understanding of religious freedom which includes witness beyond the walls of the church building."

For more information about the persecuted church in China and other parts of the world, visit the Voice of the Martyrs website at [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com).

### CHRISTIANS IN CHINA

House churches in Harbin, China, meet weekly for several hours at a time. To avoid attracting too much attention, the groups often move from home to home, meeting in different locations each week. China watchers are expressing concern over renewed signs of religious persecution in the country. (BP photo)



## Staff Changes

West Laurel Church, Laurel, has called **Jeff Taylor** as pastor effective November 14. Taylor comes from Carolina Church, Andalusia, Ala. He is a graduate of Samford University and Beeson Divinity School. A welcoming reception will be held December 12 from 2-4 p.m.



Taylor



Whitaker

First Church, New Augusta, recently called **Adam Whitaker** as youth minister. The church licensed him to the ministry November 14.

## JUST FOR THE RECORD



Children of Griffith Memorial, Jackson

First Church, Summit, ordained **Curtis Alton Hale** to the ministry November 21. Hale serves as the preschool and children's minister.

**Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson**, recently recognized the children who were promoted to from preschool to children's

Sunday School. The first graders were presented Bibles during morning worship. Pictured are Keith Hill, Christopher Whitfield, Jacob Derrick, Madeline Maynard, and Aaron McGowan. Philip D. Cooper is pastor.

**Hillcrest Church, New Albany**, received their second Eagle Award for Excellence in Sunday School growth and outreach October 10. Pictured (from left) are James Davis, Shannon Cobb, and John Clendinning, MBCB.

**Highland Church, Natchez**, held a note burning recently. Pictured (from left) are David McGuffee, pastor, and Bruce McCall.



Davis, Cobb, and Clendinning



Highland Church Note Burning, Natchez

**Union Church, Brookhaven**, had RA day November 14. The RAs participated in the morning service and received their badges and awards that night. Pictured (from left) are Brady Crane, Steven Jenkins, Chase Crane, Nathan Moak, Dusty Parks, and Don Lofton.

**Lillian Miller** (left), a volunteer missionary, and **Heather Matthews** (right), a career missionary, are pictured at the Roundtable Meeting of the Women on Mission of First Church,

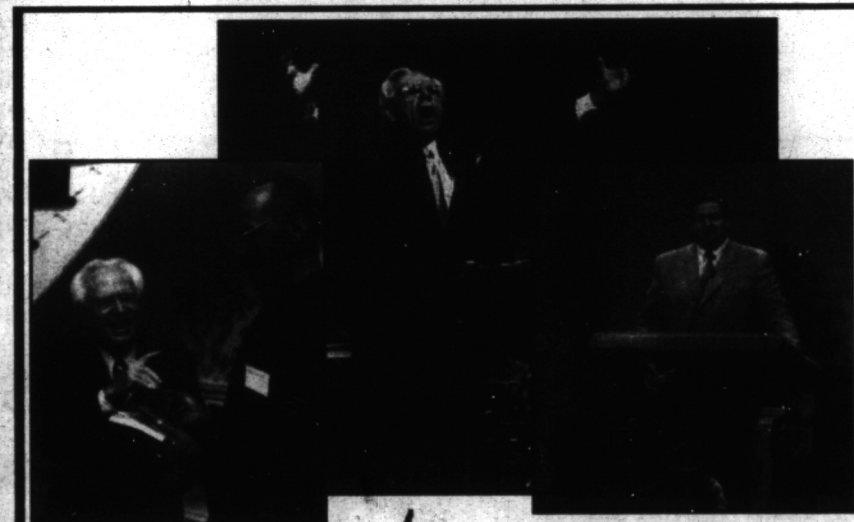
**Greenville**. Miller gave a program on her fourth mission trip to China, and Matthews will be leaving for China in 2005.



Miller and Matthews



Union Church RA Day, Brookhaven



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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



Jimmy Boyd, Mattie Lee Williams, and Tim Bass, pastor

Missionary Margaret Nikol, concert violinist and native Bulgarian, performed at Washington Church, Washington, November 13 and 14. Pictured (from left, front) are Patricia Huff, (back) Nikol, Terry Upchurch, pastor, and Melissa Upchurch. The church gave an offering for Nikol to purchase and distribute Bibles.

Locust Hill Church, Pontotoc County, presented Mattie Lee Williams with her 21 year Sunday School pin. Pictured (from left) are Jimmy Boyd, Williams, and Tim Bass, pastor.

The Jaybird Saints Senior Adults of Grays Creek Church, Hernando, are having a Christmas Party December 14. They will go to Barnhill's Restaurant, Collierville, Tenn. Be

at church by 10 a.m. if you would like to join them.

The Children's Choir of North Carrollton Church, North Carrollton, will present Miracle on Bethlehem Street December 12 at 7 p.m. All are invited to attend. For more information, call (662) 237-0047 or (662) 897-9777.

Russell Church, Meridian, will honor Wilton T. Bennett with a retirement reception for his 48 years in the ministry December 19 from 3-5 p.m.

Union Church, Tylertown, will have a live drive-thru nativity scene December 10 and 11 from 6:30-7:15 p.m. and 7:45-8:30 p.m. Admission is free. There will be cookies, candies, wassail, and hot cocoa. For questions, call (601) 876-6618 or (601) 876-9294.

The worship choir and drama team of Glade Church, Laurel, will present Journey to the Manger: A Search for the True Meaning of Christmas December 19 at 6 p.m. For more information, call (601) 649-4246. Hueston Adkins is interim pastor.

Billy W. Baker has retired from the pastorate after serving 39 years, 25 of those at West Ripley Church, Ripley. Baker is available for pulpit supply or revivals and can be reached at (662) 837-9878 or (662) 837-5037.

Highland Church, Natchez, held a deacon ordination and installation recently. Pictured (from left) are Bruce McCall, Pam Rymer, Leland Rymer, newly ordained deacon, and David McGuffee, pastor. The newly installed deacon was Mark Taylor.

Jupiter Church, Simpson Association, ordained four

men as deacons November 14. Pictured (from left) are Clint Welch, Eric Bowen, Brad White, and Rob Grubbs. Bruce Jolly is pastor.



Welch, Bowen, White, and Grubbs



McCall, Pam & Leland Rymer, McGuffee, pastor



Huff, Nikol, T. Upchurch, pastor, and M. Upchurch

## Youth Ministry Lab

April 8-9, 2005



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Speaker



Matt Chandler  
Speaker



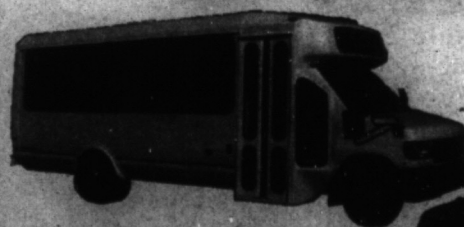
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# Controversial TV ad brings condemnation

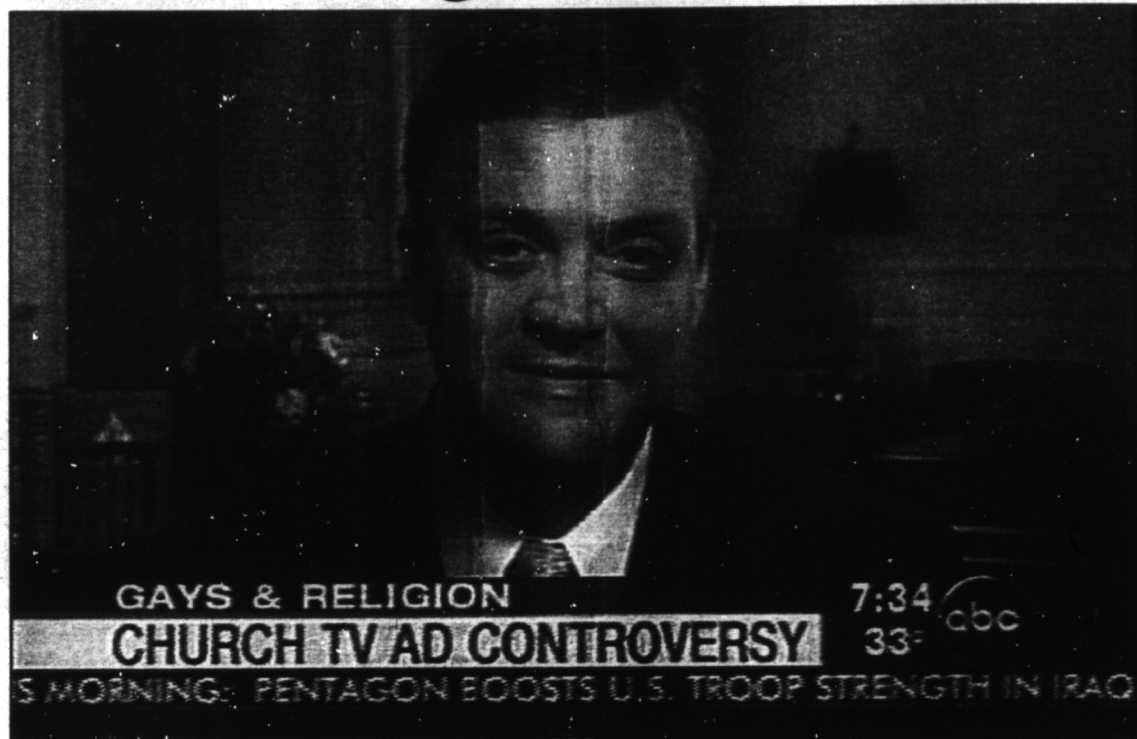
LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP, ABP, and local reports) — A new national TV advertisement promoting the United Church of Christ (UCC) implies that God is now affirming homosexuality, but R. Albert Mohler Jr., appearing on ABC's Good Morning America, said the commercial misrepresents biblical Christianity.

"It is a piece of masterful propaganda but it is a diabolical misrepresentation of Christianity," said Mohler, president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., on the national telecast Dec. 2.

The ad — which can be viewed on the UCC communications office's website at [www.stillspeaking.com](http://www.stillspeaking.com) — features two muscular male "bouncers" standing guard at the door of a picturesque church building. A male couple, holding hands, approach the bouncers, who deny them entrance. The bouncers then let a young white family through while rejecting a young African-American woman and a man who appears to be Latino. The scene is interrupted by text that reads, "Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither do we." Then, as a multiethnic and age-diverse group of people pose, smiling, inside what appears to be a church sanctuary, a narrator says, "The United Church of Christ: No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here."

According to a document that UCC officials provided to Associated Baptist Press, CBS' program practices division initially withheld approval for the ad Feb. 19, saying, "Because this commercial touches on the exclusion of gay couples and other minority groups by other individuals and organizations, and the fact that the executive branch has recently proposed a constitutional amendment to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, this spot is unacceptable for broadcast on the networks."

A UCC spokesperson said that, despite the early rejection of the ad, the church understood itself to be in continuing negotiations over the ads until their final rejection by both networks Nov. 30. Officials at ABC also reject-



UNACCEPTABLE AD — R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., appeared on Good Morning America this on Dec. 2 to discuss a controversial United Church of Christ (UCC) TV advertisement that describes homosexuals and others being turned away from most churches but accepted at UCC churches. (BP photo)

ed the ad, but UCC leaders did not protest because that network cited a policy of declining any advertising from any religious group.

A CBS spokesperson wouldn't speak on the record about the controversy other than to say that the network "has a long-standing policy of not accepting advocacy ads or issue-oriented ads." According to published accounts in the Washington Post and the New York Times, NBC executives cited a similar policy. NBC officials did not return calls from an Associated Baptist Press reporter by press time for this story.

"... Jesus Christ did indeed come to seek and to save the lost but as He said to the woman caught in adultery, 'Go and sin no more,'" Mohler said. Jesus "did not invite

persons to stay in sinful lifestyles. Rather, He came to save us from our sins and to make us what we otherwise could not be — and that is victorious over all the sins that entrap us. Homosexuality is one of those."

The ads are airing on several other broadcast and cable networks, including Fox, ABC Family, BET, and TBS, as part of a \$30 million multiyear advertising campaign designed to promote the denomination and help it gain new members. The Cleveland-based body has about 1.3 million members and 6,000 affiliated congregations nationwide. It grew out of a merger between older Congregational, Reformed, and German Evangelical denominations.

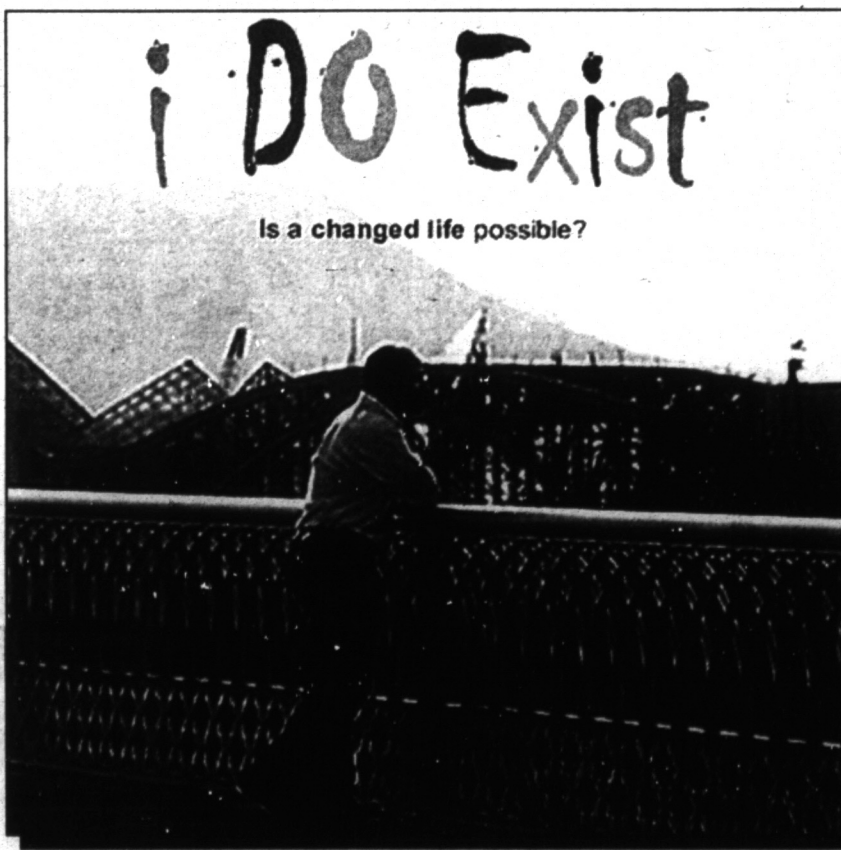
## Documentary nixes common homosexual theme

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Can homosexuals change? A new documentary says "yes," and includes interviews with people who say they've made the switch.

The 48-minute video entitled, *I Do Exist*, is intended for use as a discussion-starter in churches, schools and universities. It includes the stories of five homosexuals — three women and two men — who once were involved in homosexuality but are now heterosexual. Along the way, psychologists and psychiatrists give their thoughts as to why they believe change is possible.

The documentary, available for purchase in DVD and VHS format at [www.idoexist.com](http://www.idoexist.com), counters a series of documentaries by homosexual activists, who have had success in recent years with that format. A 1996 documentary called *It's Elementary* sought to promote the discussion of homosexuality in public school classrooms and this year, *One Wedding and a Revolution* gave a behind-the-scenes look at the push for same-sex marriage in San Francisco.

The *I Do Exist* documentary has a different message and answers those who say change is impossible. "So many ex-gays are



told that they don't exist," the documentary's producer, Grove City College psychology professor Warren Throckmorton, told Baptist Press. "... I had a client several years ago who had gone

from gay to straight who asked if I was going to write about his case, because he knew that the field didn't accept the change process. He said, 'If you do, tell them that I do exist.'"

The documentary's release comes as the issue of same-sex marriage dominates the cultural landscape in America. Behind the push for "gay marriage" is the belief that homosexuality is natural and unchangeable.

Greg Quinlan, one of the ex-homosexuals featured in the documentary, says that change wasn't an "easy thing to do." Now married, Quinlan credits his Christian faith for bringing him out of homosexuality.

"You can change. I changed," Quinlan says in the documentary. "... I know that people can change. I've seen it happen. I've done it."

Prior to coming out of homosexuality, Quinlan says he was "miserable." At one point he approached a Christian counselor only to be told that there was "no hope" to change.

"What I was reading in the Word is not what I was hearing from this man who was supposed to be a born-again Christian counselor," says Quinlan, who was a homosexual for nine years.

Jim Kragel of Cedarville University, a Christian school in Ohio, served as the documentary's director.

## Federal stats pinpoint rise in HIV/AIDS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — New statistics show that homosexual men now make up 44% of all new HIV and AIDS cases in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) released data Dec. 2 showing that the number of newly diagnosed HIV and AIDS cases has increased 11% among homosexual men. The data spanned a four-year period ending in 2003.

Despite the fact that homosexual men make up only one to two percent of the population, they nonetheless made up more than 40% of the new cases, the data showed.

For years, studies have shown that homosexual men are prone to promiscuity. A University of Chicago study released in 2003 found that 61% of homosexuals in Chicago's Shoreland area had more than 30 sexual partners.



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



John Johnson

**Edwards Church,** held a baby/child dedication October 3. Participating were Nick Wolfe with Emmaline, Cristi Wolfe with Merritt, Joy Lynn Bethea with Karla, and John Charles



Mt. Zion Church 125th Anniversary, Eupora

Bethea with Samuel. John G. McCall officiated.

Salem Church, Toomsaba, recently presented **John Johnson** (pictured) with his 44 year pin for perfect attendance in Sunday School. Thomas J. Wood is pastor.

The RAs at Canaan Church, Columbus, are collecting supplies to send to a mission school in Honduras. Pictured with supplies they have already sent are RAs Austin Hill, Brodi Owens, Dylan Chain, their teachers Ricky Hill, Rob Peal, and pastor, David Westmoreland.



RAs of Canaan Church, Columbus

Mt. Zion Church, Eupora, celebrated 125 years October 10. There was special music, reports were given, and Bryan Sherman, former pastor, spoke. The deacons and George Bland, pastor, are pictured with the certificate presented from the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission.

## Miss America debacle raises modesty issue

ANNISTON, Ala. (BP) — On the heels of ABC's decision not to renew its annual television contract with the Miss America pageant, the issue of modesty has emerged as a center-stage issue with Christians.

This year, contestants at the pageant were featured in revealing swimsuits in the on-stage competition and were placed in hot tubs during their pre-recorded introductions, but the reduction in modesty did not yield the pageant the extra exposure it had hoped to achieve. Instead, Miss America received its lowest television ratings in its 50-year history.

Only 10 girls opted for the more modest optional swimsuit while Miss America, Deidre Downs, donned the two-piece string bikini for the judges and the audience. Downs viewed the swimsuit competition as a reflection of physical fitness and told Baptist Press she tried not to think about what she was wearing before the airing of the competition.

"I just thought about what I would wear to the beach," Downs said.

The issue of modesty is not a new controversy in pageant swimsuits, but as fashion trends like short skirts, tank tops and belly shirts make their way from the local mall to worship services, church members are looking for guidance.

Modesty is one of the topics — along with dating, eating disorders, depression, and self-esteem — addressed in Beyond the Eye conferences.

The conference founder, Leslie Gary, cautions parents to be aware of contents in their daughters' wardrobe and to not only discuss why some things are not appropriate to wear but explore the roots of immodest clothing.

"I feel there are many issues that young girls face today, but I believe these issues stem from their desire to feel needed, be wanted and accepted and to fit in," she said. "Whether these girls end up becoming sexually active, wearing revealing clothing, or suffering from anorexia — just to name a few things — they have a longing in their hearts for true acceptance."

The birth of the Beyond the Eye ministry came from Gary's

own struggle with self-worth and identity. "I personally have struggled with low self-esteem and inferiority my entire life," she said, "but God has allowed me to be taught His Word through various ways and has graciously allowed me to have some amazing role models in my life."

Many girls dress inappropriately because they have never been taught that their beauty is far beyond what people see on the outside, Gary said.

"It is a heart issue," she said. "I truly believe that confusion about modesty and clothing that is appropriate will begin to subside once God's Word is planted daily into the hearts of these girls. We desire to judge no one. Our desire is to give girls the key that opens the truth about who they are through God's Word."

Mary Mohler, director of the Seminary Wives Institute at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and wife of seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr., sees an opportunity for Christian parents to teach daughters, and other misguided women, that modesty matters.

"A daughter must be taught from an early age that her body is precious and should never be flaunted," Mohler said. "Fathers need to lovingly convey this message to their daughters, as they can give first-hand testimony of how men think and respond."

Modest dressing by women, of all ages, Mohler said, is a reflection of God's work of grace in a woman's heart.



**PRAYING FOR MODESTY** — Beyond the Eye Conference founder Leslie Gary prays with workshop leaders during a conference in 2003 that promoted modesty as an alternative to today's sexually provocative garments. Gary says girls dress immodestly because they have a "desire to feel needed." (BP photo by Theresa Shadrix)

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# Women gather for Sisters Who Care Conf.

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP) — When she was a missionary in Nairobi, Chiffon Chambers cringed every time an African would ask, all too frequently, why most missionaries are white. Chambers is black.

The perception is one that Chambers and a growing number of mission-minded women across the United States hope to change.

At this fall's second annual Sisters Who Care conference at LifeWay's Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, nearly 300 African American women from 21 states celebrated their "sisterhood" — both in Christ and in their ethnic heritage.

Sister to sister, they could joke and speak frankly about the challenges of being black women — and the strengths they have gained by enduring such challenges.

The women arrived from states as distant as Alaska for three days of fellowship, laughter, study, worship, prayer, and inspirational music.

Conference attendees learned of a forgotten missionary tradition that is theirs to reclaim. Chambers, who worked in Africa for three years as an International Mission Board videographer, informed the vocally responsive crowd they are suffering from a mistakenly whitewashed impression.

The very first American missionary, she pointed out, was a black man in 1782. "My point is that Satan is trying to convince us it is a white man's ministry, and we buy into that," Chambers said.

The Great Commission is a call to all people, not just those of European descent, she contended to roaring applause.

"There is a long list of African Americans — freed slaves, as if they didn't have enough on their plate — who still felt the need to tell others," Chambers said.

In addition to Chambers, seminary professor Carolyn Gordon addressed the conference with a challenging message, "We have spent our resources on things in our lives that do not satisfy us."

Gordon paused, shook her head and, with her trademark wit, cracked, "I'm amazed at the number of Coach-carrying, Prada-wearing, weave-wearing sisters who are just broke."

Then, in a serious moment, she passionately whispered to a hushed auditorium,



PRAYER FOR SISTERS — Debra Berry, national Woman's Missionary Union team leader for adult ministries, leads several hundred women in prayer during the Sisters Who Care conference at LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina. (BP photo by Kent Harville)

"We waste our resources because we do not yet understand who we are in God."

"Sisters Who Care: Women on Mission" was the brainchild of Debra Berry, a national ministry consultant for the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) who was perplexed at the limited involvement of blacks in WMU's Women on Mission programs. She coined the phrase four years ago, hoping to make a culturally relevant connection with fellow African American women.

Historical research showed Berry that many black Baptist churches have the word "missionary" in their names because they were in the forefront of post-Civil War missions until the 1930s.

What brought blacks back from the mission field and shifted their attention inward to the local church was a simultaneous loss of backing from predominantly white supporting agencies and the colonial governments of Africa.

The Sisters Who Care conference paid tribute to historical black role models of bygone eras such as Nannie Helen Burroughs, who organized her fellow black women into missions at the turn of the 20th century.

"People of color aren't really exposed to that [example]," said Kenyatta Garner, who came with a group of 55 women from Spring Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit. She said her church only recently started participating in international missions.

The most empowering message she took from the conference, Garner said, was learning that other people share similar struggles, such as being unsure of God's plan and direction.

For more information on the Sisters Who Care program, contact Kathy Burns in the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3324 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 324. E-mail: kburns@mbcb.org.

## Europeans squeeze religion out of unifying pact

ROME (BP) — When 25 European Union (EU) leaders signed the first EU Constitution, any reference to the continent's Christian roots was omitted despite requests from the Vatican.

The constitution, which consolidates past EU treaties, was signed Oct. 29 but is largely viewed as ceremonial because national parliaments from member countries still must ratify it.

"What religious sense that remains [in Europe] is little more than a residue of history," Darrell Bock, a New Testament studies professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, observed in a Dallas Morning News column.

"Europe is post-Christian, almost completely secular," wrote Bock, who is currently a guest scholar in Germany. "Fewer than five percent of Europeans go to church or synagogue, a great contrast to the 40-50% in the United States."

Bock added that more Muslims in England attend

weekly worship services than do Anglicans.

"The Holy See has always favored the promotion of a united Europe on the basis of those values that are part of its history," Pope John Paul II said after the signing of the constitution, according to The New York Times. "Keeping into account the continent's Christian roots means making use of a spiritual heritage that remains fundamental for the union's future developments."

Examples abound, however, of Europe's growing secularism. The Roman Catholic Italian minister who was nominated as the union's justice minister withdrew his candidacy after drawing criticism for his conservative views. During his confirmation hearings before the European Parliament, Rocco Buttiglione called homosexuality a sin and said women are better off married and at home. The candidate who has replaced Buttiglione favors homosexual unions.

"The rights of homosexuals should be defended on the same basis as the rights of all European citizens," Buttiglione had said in part. "I would not accept the idea that homosexuals are a category apart."

"The European Parliament probably would have rejected Bush, but the American people have instead voted for him," Buttiglione commented after stepping aside, according to The Times. "America has shown itself more religious and more attentive to values than Europe."

The EU is dealing with religion in another area over the question of admitting Turkey into membership. Though the EU has in the past cited concerns about Turkey's human rights and democracy practices, some say the underlying concern is Islam.

A report in the November issue of Egypt Today recounted that 20 to 30 percent of the French population under the age of 25 are now Muslim. Demographers also contend that native-born

French are not reproducing at nearly the rate of France's large Muslim immigrant community. France has more Muslim immigrants than any state in the EU, currently representing about seven percent of the nation's 60 million people.

Thus, the French fear that allowing Turkey into the EU would cause "the river of Islam to enter the riverbed of secularism" at an even faster rate than the present time, according to Egypt Today writer Tom Goeller. Polls in France show a majority of the population opposing Turkey's entry into the EU.

Turkey should be allowed into the EU, Goeller contended, because it is the only Muslim country in the world that is governed by what can be called a democracy.

"Therefore, Turkey is the proof that Islam and democracy are compatible, a fact that is vehemently denied by radical Islamists," Goeller wrote. "There can be no doubt..."



### YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.  
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.  
(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.  
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him.  
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Follow Jesus, the Messiah

John 1:35-50

By Frances C. Graham

Imagine watching John, the Baptist, as he looked upon Jesus. John's eyes are literally fixed upon Him. You realize John is diligent and in deep thought regarding Jesus.

His focus is so great that when he states "Look, The Lamb of God!" (John 1:36) two of his own disciples turn to follow Jesus. You notice that John did not command them to do so. They simply knew John well enough to know that if John's testimony and unselfish desire to glorify Christ was that great, then this must be the one that they should follow.

Andrew and an unnamed disciple, possibly the author of this gospel John, demonstrated following Jesus first in a physical act but more importantly in a spiritual sense as well.

Jesus felt their very presence and turned to invite them into

His acquaintance by asking them what they wanted to say to Him.

You notice how easy Jesus makes one feel when they want to talk with Him.

The disciples inquire about where Jesus lives. When they address Jesus, they call Him "Rabbi." The term rabbi (meaning master teacher) displays their desire to be taught by Him. The disciples also recognized they not only need to be taught by Him but they needed to also lodge with Him and to have a fixed communion with Him.

Christ invited them to come to His lodgings immediately without delay.

Now as you have observed this interaction and you too are beginning to have a desire to follow this man Jesus, "The Lamb of God," you wonder how accepting is He really? It didn't appear that the two dis-



Graham

ciples had any unique characteristics to make them worthy of being accepted so readily by "The Lamb of God." They just seemed to want to know more and He was very willing to bring them into His presence.

After the two disciples spent the day with Jesus, they knew that they must tell others. Andrew sought out his brother Simon and told him "We have found the Messiah." (John 1:41)

Then Andrew brought Simon to Jesus because he loved his brother and wanted to share his finding the Messiah with him.

When Simon came into Jesus' presence, Jesus greeted him and then gave him a new name: Cephas (Aramaic) which means stone. The Greek equivalent to Cephas is Peter. The giving of the new name signified acceptance.

Then following their time together, Jesus left to go to Galilee. On the way He sees Phillip and instructs him to "Follow Me!" (John 1:43)

Phillip realizes this is the Messiah and runs to tell his friend Nathanael (who is Bartholomew in the New Testament). Phillip almost shouts at Nathanael that they had found the One Moses wrote about in the Law.

As Nathanael approaches, Jesus states that Nathanael is a true and righteous Israelite or Jew. He also notes that Nathanael is a student of the Torah.

With the introduction that Jesus is giving, Nathanael wants to know how Jesus knows him.

Jesus states that He saw Nathanael under the fig tree before Philip called him. Now to say the least, Nathanael is shocked that Jesus knew of his exact location even before Philip found him. He realizes that Jesus must know everything about him.

Nathanael declares, "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49)

It seemed so inconceivable that you could so easily become a follower of Jesus until you saw how easy and accepting He was to the two disciples. Then as He continued to draw

others to Him, you realized that He is "The Lamb of God." You openly want to confess that you are going to follow Him.

You also want to be sure that your family knows this person as "The Lamb of God" who takes away the sins of the world, so you immediately begin to witness to the ones closest to you. You know that the world needs to know Jesus but you also realize that you can and should witness to everyone with which you have contact. You don't necessarily have to go to Galilee but you can witness right in your own family and hometown.

Having seen the way these disciples witnessed, you notice they never demonstrated selfish desire to keep Him just to themselves. They simply wanted to promote Jesus both in their spoken word and in their very belief by following Him. They were willing to allow Jesus to lead them and follow His plan for their lives. You decide that this is what you want as well.

Graham is a member of Adaton Church, Starkville.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Dealing with Disappointment

Luke 15:18-32

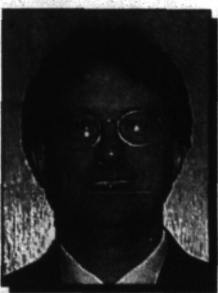
By Neil Gant

Children say the darndest things. The truth of that spawned a long-running hit television program. A child will speak in honesty and perhaps say some things the parents and siblings would not want revealed. Most of the time these slips are nothing more than a minor embarrassment and a comic relief. One of the main characters of this week's lesson indicated to his father words that were much more pointed and expressed a selfish heart. In verse 12 the younger of two sons demanded his inheritance. His request was one that suggested he could not wait for his father to die or he wished the father were dead. The son was not entitled to the inheritance while his father lived. He graciously granted the request. The son left home just a

few days later. Sinners are often in great haste to get away from God. The younger son quickly wasted all he had. He had gone to the excesses of sin and now found himself at the end of his rope. No doubt this young man was a disappointment to his father. He came to his senses. He realized his sin. He was awakened. He admitted his sin. He was moved to repentance. The change is clear. He moved from the demanding son to one who is now willing to be a servant. Following through the remainder of the lesson outline, it is interesting to note what type of responses he received on his return.

**DO WE OFFER GRACE? LUKE 15:18-24**

The young man started his journey home and began by



Gant

planning a speech for his father. He was prepared to become a servant in his father's household. He never had the opportunity to finish the speech. The younger son made the journey back from the far country. He was walking toward home.

The father saw him. The force of the parable is that the father had been looking for the son regularly, perhaps even daily. The father was expecting his return. When he saw the son, the father ran and with compassion repeatedly kissed his son. The father never responded to the speech. He called for a robe, an item reserved for the guest of honor. He asked for a ring, a symbol of authority. He asked for sandals because slaves did not wear shoes. The father showed the son's full restoration. The killed the calf, the fatted one. They rejoiced. How heaven rejoices when one sinner comes to faith in Christ.

**DO WE GET ANGRY? LUKE 15:25-28**

The older son came near the house from the field. He heard the music and dancing. He found out from one of the servants what it meant. His immediate response was one of anger. The older exemplifies the self-righteous Pharisees who sought to please God by their efforts. They had no joy when a sinner repented. The older son's behavior was more socially acceptable than that of the younger, but he still needed to repent. God is not pleased by a wicked lifestyle of any kind. The self-righteous church-goer who thinks he or she is better than someone else is in need of repentance as much as the person living an openly wicked lifestyle.

**DO WE CONDEMN? LUKE 15:29-30**

The father again comes out to meet a wayward son. This time it is the son who stayed with him but still strayed from him. The older son does not appear to understand the heart of the father. He emphasized his service and how he never dis-

obeyed. He then questioned his father's goodness because he never gave him a goat so that he might have a party with his friends. He then compared himself to the younger son. He pointed a finger of condemnation toward his brother and toward his father. He condemned the brother for wasting the inheritance on harlots. He condemned the father for forgiving and accepting the younger son back into the home and expressing great love for him.

**DO WE FORGIVE? LUKE 15:31-32**

The father showed his love for both sons. First, he comforted and encouraged the older son. He thanked him for his faithful service and told him that whatever he needed was readily available. Second, he showed love for the other son by saying that it was the right thing to rejoice for his brother's return. He was dead and is alive, he was lost and is found.

Gant is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Gore Springs.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing time and space constraints, no text attachments will be accepted. Photographs and drawings are preferred.

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Please make articles concise. Include only the who, what, when, where details of the event. Do not include contact persons or telephone numbers.

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file.

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, buildings, or objects only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photos should be made within one week of publication.



# Hindus of east Africa in need of Gospel

**EAST AFRICA (BP)** — Kneeling next to the gigantic bonfire, a woman fans the smoke closer to cleanse her body. Nearby, a man rummages in the fire, hoping to extract a burning stick to take home. Others scoop smoldering ashes into containers. All hope these acts will cleanse their souls of any demons and bring good luck for the rest of the year.

Despite heavy rains, thousands of Hindus living in East Africa recently flocked to a festival commemorating the destruction of the 10-headed demon, Ravana, thousands of years ago. This ceremony, called Dussehra, celebrates the mythical victory of good over evil. Giant 20-foot effigies of Ravana, stuffed with firecrackers, are lit with flaming arrows.

A crowd gathers around a truck that carries actors depicting the tale of Prince Rama and the 10-headed demon. A South Asian man points out Hanuman, the king of monkeys. "There," he says to his children. "He's the hero. With his long tail, he set fire to the demons and helped to vanquish all evil in the world."

The father ushers his children closer to the burning effigy as he continues the story.

Forced into exile, Prince Rama's wife Sita was kidnapped by a 10-headed demon and held captive on the island of Sri Lanka, the father recounts. Rama searched for her and finally rescued her after she was located by Hanuman and his monkey army. The demon, Ravana, was destroyed by fire because of his evil ways, the father concludes.

"This is an important ceremony. It shows the triumph of Lord Rama over the demon king," an East African Hindu

woman says after kneeling in prayer next to the burning effigy. "Demons are around us every day. This is a chance for people to cleanse themselves of the evil within them, allowing them to follow a path of virtue and goodness."

A small but influential South Asian population lives and works in East Africa. Those celebrating Dussehra are mostly Punjabi Hindus, descendants of South Asians who came to Africa as laborers for the British Empire. Today, around 500,000 live in East Africa and make their living as shopkeepers and businessmen.

Christian workers say the number of believers among South Asians living in Africa reflects the number of believers in South Asia -- very few. A rough estimate of South Asians in the region has the number of Christians hovering around 300. Considering that 7,000 turned out on a rainy night for the Dussehra festival, Christian workers say more laborers are needed to help spread the Gospel.

Those workers ask Southern Baptists to pray that:

- chronological Bible storying can be done in homes of South Asians where idols and gods fill the bookshelves and walls.

- workers will be led to South Asians who have open hearts and are ready to hear the Gospel story.

- more laborers will come to help spread the Gospel in culturally appropriate ways.

- God will strengthen and enable Christian workers who minister among South Asians in Africa.

*Editor's note: For more information on outreach in East Africa, visit <http://imb.org/cesa>.*



**FALSE GODS** — About 500,000 South Asians live and work in East Africa, most Punjabi Hindus descended from laborers brought to Africa during the British Empire. Many focus on the false gods of the Hundi religion for their deliverance. Only about 300 are Christian believers. (BP photo by Sue Sprenkle)

## Bibliocipher

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B KCS JXYP SPJ, YGCY

DBLTMBKT OPS KGCDD

HT BX GTCZTX PZTF PXT

KBXXTF YGCY FTUTXYTYG,

EPFT YGCX PZTF XBXTYS

CXR XBXT OJKY UTFKPKX,

MGBAG XTTR XP

FTUTXYCXAT.

DJLT IBIYTTX: KTZTX

Clue: J = U

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle:  
Luke 16:16

## Texas woman takes on education bureaucracy

**DALLAS (BP)** — A stay-at-home mom who became fed up with the influence of "liberal-leaning groups" and unelected bureaucrats on textbook content developed a simple strategy for change.

State Board of Education (SBOE) member Terri Leo of Spring, Texas, argued that the agency must "uphold state law" in adopting proposed textbooks, compelling publishers to change language that tacitly endorsed same-sex marriage in secondary-level health books.

Texas is one of 22 states with a formal textbook adoption process, but because it is the second-largest buyer in the country, publishers typically accommodate changes

Leo

proposed by the state agency. With a conservative-led SBOE majority influencing the final product, books that meet Texas standards often make their way into other states, extending the board's influence.

When the State Board of Education met Nov. 4 to replace 11-year-old health text-

books, Leo presented a list of changes necessary for the agency to be in compliance with state law. The former public school teacher, who was elected to the board in late 2002, cited every suspect reference that put the textbooks at odds with the state's definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman and a statute mandating an abstinence-based message in sex education.

"I've never seen the national media fly in so fast," Leo told Baptist Press. "The motion [to delay] was made and everything broke loose," she said. "When we came back on Friday, they asked the board if they could make those revisions and the board gave permission to do that."

Leo's motion to adopt the commissioner's report to accept all health textbooks, including the corrections, passed 14-1. The lone dissent came from a Dallas board member who wanted more comprehensive information on contraception options.

With the addition of "a solid definition of marriage as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman" at the beginning of pertinent instruction in the Holt textbooks, Leo gladly dropped her concern that words like "partner" and "couple" could be misconstrued as references to same-sex couples. The Glencoe

books traded "partners" for references to "husbands and wives" or "a man and a woman." A passage that spoke of a person being "attracted to others" was changed to "attracted to the opposite sex."

"We took an oath of office to uphold state law," Leo said, "and state law defines marriage." Because the SBOE is a state agency, Leo argued they must abide by the Texas of Marriage Act's stipulation that the state "may not give effect to a public act, record, or judicial proceeding that creates, recognizes or validates a marriage between persons of the same sex or a civil union."

The same reasoning motivated the board's preference for textbooks that uphold abstinence as the only way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, pointing to a 1995 Texas law mandating that abstinence be taught as the only effective means of preventing pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

"It is not teachers and health experts, but parents who are picking the curriculum," Leo said, "which is as it should be." Texas law also gives parents the right to remove a child from any portion of sexuality instruction and opens curriculum up to inspection.

